

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1. **(Currently Amended)** A genetically altered mouse ~~defective~~ deficient in functional Caspase-9 expression due to a defective Caspase-9 gene, wherein a homozygous mutation in said defective Caspase-9 gene causes reduced apoptosis in brain, spinal cord, dexamethasone-treated thymocytes, cardiac muscle, or smooth muscle, or reduced apoptosis associated with viral infection.
2. **(Canceled)**
3. **(Currently Amended)** A method of producing a genetically altered mouse ~~defective~~ deficient in functional Caspase-9 expression due to a defective Caspase-9 gene, wherein a homozygous mutation in said defective Caspase-9 gene causes reduced apoptosis in brain, spinal cord, dexamethasone-treated thymocytes, cardiac muscle, or smooth muscle, or reduced apoptosis associated with viral infection, the method comprising the steps of:
 - a. providing an isolated DNA sequence comprising a genomic DNA sequence encoding a mouse Caspase-9 that is defective in that it does not contain the pentapeptide motif QACXG (SEQ ID NO: 7), wherein "X" is arginine or glycine;
 - b. introducing said isolated DNA sequence into a mouse embryonic stem cell under conditions that cause genomic DNA sequence to stably integrate, via homologous recombination, into a chromosome of said stem cell;
 - c. incorporating said stem cell into a mouse blastocyst to produce a chimeric mouse;
 - d. breeding said chimeric mouse to produce mice heterozygous for said genomic DNA sequence encoding said defective Caspase-9, thereby producing a genetically altered mouse defective in Caspase-9 expression.
4. **(Previously Presented)** The method according to claim 3, wherein said isolated DNA sequence additionally comprises a selectable marker gene.
5. **(Original)** The method according to claim 4, wherein said marker gene is a neo gene.

6-7. (Canceled)

8. (Previously Presented) The genetically altered mouse according to claim 1, wherein said mouse is heterozygous for the defective Caspase-9 gene.
9. (Previously Presented) The genetically altered mouse according to claim 1, wherein said mouse is homozygous for the defective Caspase-9 gene.
10. (Currently Amended) A genetically altered mouse ~~defective~~ deficient in functional Caspase-9 expression due to a defective Caspase-9 gene, wherein said defective Caspase-9 gene comprises ~~mouse is characterized by~~ a DNA sequence encoding a Caspase-9 protein that does not contain the pentapeptide motif QACXG (SEQ ID NO: 7), and wherein a homozygous mutation in said defective Caspase-9 gene causes reduced apoptosis in brain, spinal cord, dexamethasone-treated thymocytes, cardiac muscle, or smooth muscle, or reduced apoptosis associated with viral infection.
11. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 3, further comprising:
 - e. interbreeding said mice heterozygous for the genomic DNA sequence encoding the defective Caspase-9 to produce homozygous mice ~~defective~~ deficient in functional Caspase-9 expression.